

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, IS, JO, US, XF
SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING--ISRAELI INTENTIONS AND AREA SITUATION

1. DURING MY JULY 18 MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN, HE TOLD ME OF HIS CONTINUING CONCERN ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS. HE SAID THAT WITHIN LAST WEEK HE HAD OBSERVED EXTREMELY HEAVY PATTERN OF ISRAELI OVERFLIGHT ACTIVITIES COVERING ROUGHLY SEVEN-MILE PENETRATIONS OF EAST BANK. HIS JUDGMENT WAS THAT ISRAELIS WERE PREPARING THEIR PILOTS BY FAMILIARIZING THEM WITH TARGETS ALONG JORDAN'S MAIN DEFENSE LINE. HE FOUND THIS INEXPLICABLY OMINOUS AND CONCERNING.

2. WHEN I TALKED ABOUT OBVIOUS CHANGES IN BEGIN GOVERNMENT'S RHETORIC ON THE PEACE PROCESS AND YESTERDAY'S CUT IN THE ISRAELI DEFENSE BUDGET, KING SAID THAT HE WAS AFRAID THAT MOST OF THIS WAS A TACTIC TO LULL THE U.S., EUROPE, AND ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS INTO A POSITION WHERE AN ATTACK WAS NOT EXPECTED. HE SAID AFTER THE MOST CAREFUL REVIEW, HE FELT THE ISRAELI CABINET, DOMINATED AS IT IS BY MILITARY

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FIGURES, WOULD CHOOSE TO EXPLOIT THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE IN ANY ATTACK ON JORDAN OR SOUTH LEBANON. HE THUS SAID HE SAW POSITIVE MOVES AS PART OF POSSIBLE ISRAELI PREPARATIONS, NOT AS TRUE INDICATORS OF ISRAEL'S REAL INTEREST IN REACHING A PEACE AGREEMENT, BUT RATHER AS POSSIBLY MASKING ISRAEL'S TRUE INTENTIONS.

3. HE SAID HE HAD RECEIVED TWO MESSAGES PASSED TO HIM THROUGH WEST BANK ARABS FROM THE ISRAELI MILITARY GOVERNMENT OFFICE. (ONE CAME THROUGH PRIME MINISTER AND THE OTHER THROUGH INFORMATION MINISTER WHO FOLLOWS WEST BANK AFFAIRS.) MESSAGES WERE TO THE EFFECT THAT ISRAELIS WOULD NOT ALLOW ANY OUTSIDE MONEY TO COME IN FOR SUPPORT OF WEST BANK CITIES WITHOUT THE WRITTEN APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATE MINISTRY OR AUTHORITY. KING DID NOT DISCUSS THIS FURTHER BUT LEFT ME WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT SUCH A PROPOSAL MIGHT BE EITHER A WAY OF FURTHER ISOLATING THE WEST BANK FROM DEVELOPMENT FUNDS AND ACTIVITIES OR ALTERNATIVELY OF EMBARRASSING THE JORDAN GOVERNMENT WITH ITS ARAB WORLD COLLEAGUES.

4. COMMENT: KING'S JITTERS ON ISRAEL'S INTENTIONS HAVE CONTINUED SINCE INAUGURATION OF BEGIN GOVERNMENT. HE CANNOT HELP BUT GET ANXIOUS WHEN, LIVING AS HE DOES ON THE LIP OF THE JORDAN VALLEY, OVERFLIGHTS PASS OVER HIS PALACE AND SONIC BOOMS FREQUENTLY RATTLE THE WINDOWS. HE TOLD ME ON HIS RECENT VISITS TO THE ARAB WORLD HE HAD TRIED TO TALK SENSIBLY TO HIS ARAB COLLEAGUES ABOUT BEING MORE FORTHCOMING ON THE PEACE PROCESS AND MORE SENSIBLE IN RESOLVING PALESTINIAN ISSUES.

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UNFORTUNATELY, I THINK ALSO HE HAS GIVEN THEM A REAL EARFUL ON HIS CONCERNS ABOUT AN ISRAELI SURPRISE ATTACK. IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL, IF AFTER BEGIN VISIT, WE HAD ANYTHING POSITIVE WE CAN SAY TO THE KING ON THE SCORE OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS, THAT WE DO SO QUICKLY AND BY MESSAGE FROM THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL. WE HAVE SHARED WITH HIM HERE WHAT LITTLE WE CAN CONCERNING OUR VIEWS OF ISRAELI MILITARY ACTIVITIES. ARAB CONCERNS, PARTICULARLY IN SYRIA, CAN BE FURTHER ATTENUATED IF WE ARE ABLE AND PREPARED TO DO SOMETHING POSITIVE TO HELP IT COOL HUSSEIN AND POSSIBLY OTHERS' AGITATION OVER WHAT THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO DO IN THE MILITARY AREA. PICKERING

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